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MARCH, 1952

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Edited by

Peter Hugh Reed

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formerly

The American Music Lover

A Letter From Australia

And Some Editorial Notes

▲ NOT SO LONG AGO, I had a letter from "down under," as we say in this country when referring to Australia. Correspondence in the past with readers in Australia and New Zealand has promoted a stronger feeling in me for these distant countries and their friendly people. How closely allied some of the Australians feel to us, and how many have expressed preference for American products! I do not think my latest Australian correspondent will resent my mentioning his name or his home town. His name is Reginald Molony, and he lives in Melbourne. His sincerity and enthusiasm suggest a young man, a state of being that some of us can envy. He begins his letter by expressing his appreciation of the *Record Guide* — to him it is the best of the several magazines he subscribes to dealing with recordings. The English publications, he says, "I find inadequate in their reviews, so different from those by your contributors which — to my mind — are models of relevance and conciseness, although those dealing with works on labels other than London are of only academic interest to the majority of readers here and in England. Nevertheless, they provide very interesting and thought-provoking reading. I wonder if music lovers in the States appreciate the wealth of recorded music now available to them on long-play. A number of enthusiasts here are determined to obtain some of these discs, notwithstanding the dollar situation. Not only is the quantity of long-playing records limited here, but the procurement of high-fidelity equipment presents something of a problem.

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"The range of speaker units, available here, is limited at present to two English jobs, corresponding in price to your \$60 range. Although Altec 604Bs can be had, the cost is truly prohibitive for most, selling as they do at roughly \$360, which is double the cost in America. The pickup position is even worse, with plenty of 'groove grinders' of the type still being fitted to both cheap and expensive commercial gramophones, or 'grams' — as we say, but very little in the way of top quality arms and cartridges.

"After a great deal of expense, I have finally reached a reasonable standard of reproduction within the limits imposed by a single coaxial unit.

"You may be interested to hear something of orchestral standards in Australia generally, and more particularly in Melbourne. Six of the seven States now have permanent orchestras run and financed by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and State governments. However, only those of Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide are at present worthy of consideration — the first two mentioned being the most important, although Henry Krips has done much for the Perth Orchestra since taking over in '48.

"Eugene Goossens, since coming out here from America, has done and is doing excellent work in Sydney, but Melbourne unfortunately has no permanent conductor, although we have had Galliera here for the greater part of the past season. Many would like to have him return and even remain permanently. But there has been talk of late of Sir John Barbirolli or Rafael

Kubelik being offered the job. This is not improbable as our concert season corresponds to the off-season in America, England and the Continent.

"As to orchestral standards, I reckon the Melbourne and Sydney Orchestras would counterpart your Dallas, Rochester and Baltimore organizations, though not having heard them in the flesh it is difficult to say. The first desk players in Melbourne, I think, are superior to their Sydney counterparts, particularly in the brass and woodwind sections, but the ensemble of the latter taken all around is the better of the two. I hope someday you can hear some of our orchestras on records."

It would be most interesting to hear some orchestral recordings from "down under," especially some by our old friend Eugene Goossens, who did some nice things with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Inasmuch as we are getting recordings from so many countries these days, it seems to me that England might consider representing the up-and-coming artistry of her various colonial possessions. I have never been able to understand England's neglect of Canadian artistic endeavors. Only an American recording company seems to have been sufficiently adventuresome to record the Toronto Symphony Orchestra which sustains a fine reputation in the Dominion to the north of us. True, some recordings are made in Australia but these are not representative of her leading orchestras (in so far as I know) or, if they are, they do not have the universal distribution of recordings made in England. As I have friends in South

Africa, I am informed of that country's cultural efforts and I feel certain that some representative recordings from the orchestras down there might prove better products than a lot of those we are getting from Europe these days. Such artistic reciprocity would seem to me in the true spirit of modern times. Artistic and business chauvinism should be discouraged.

I do not believe it would be possible for American record companies to go "down under" and acquire some worthwhile performances. England might not favor such a daring move on the part of our enterprising concerns which are spreading out all over. Moreover, Union costs might be prohibitive, particularly if a foreign concern invaded such territories. But one is reminded of the politic promulgation, in these days of quick communications, of the one-world theory which endorses universal recognition and goodwill among all men in the democratic way of living. All art is universal and all democratic countries should be represented in the wider distribution.

While Mr. Molony's complimentary comments to our work on the behalf of recorded music are appreciated, I cannot help but feel that he is somewhat unfair to British writers. But, perhaps, his viewpoint — shared by many others who have written us through the years — is indicative of a growing admiration for American ways and customs. During the war, I had many friends, stationed in Australia, who wrote to me of the cordiality of the folks "down under" toward America and Americans.

(Continued on page 226)

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LP SERVES OPERA BEST

By Bernard Lebow

SOME OF US regard with scorn the era when concert programs offered a series of individual movements from symphonies and other large compositions, instead of the works in their complete form. Yet there are countless people habituated to operatic and radio recitals for whom the great operas are typified by one or two arias, not necessarily the best or the most representative. For them, the meaning of the particular aria and its connection with a throbbing emotional drama are at best tenuous.

This would not be a matter for much concern in the case of the "Largo" from Handel's *Xerxes*, "Va pensiero" from Verdi's *Nabucco*, or "Quando le sere al placido" from *Luisa Miller*, where the operas in question have for various reasons declined in popular esteem, and only a single melody, rich in emotional factors, remains to tantalize us. A great disservice is done to the cause of opera, however, by the constant repetition of certain sections which have become stale through over-familiarity or ridiculous because of the manner of performance. "Caro nome," a hushed soliloquy, becomes the vehicle for bravura concert performance, and the "Quartet" has its very melodiousness made the subject of burlesque. *Rigoletto* and Verdi himself are reduced in this way to meaninglessness.

Makers of LP recordings are, therefore, to be highly commended in that they have helped audiences to come of age. By producing in their entirety operas, oratorios, etc., they have made opera-listening almost effortless, comparatively inexpensive, and relieved of the nuisance of breaks in continuity every four minutes. They have endowed with new life the well-worn works whose hit tunes in their proper

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context no longer sound like clichés. No one hearing the marvelous series of complete Verdi recordings can afford to be patronizing and say, as did an older generation, that Verdi's music appeals to the feet. Even the barrel-organ tunes, "Ai nostri monti" and "Anvil Chorus," when heard as part of a complete *Trovatore* are immensely moving.

LP's have also widened the world of operatic music. Now available on records are such lesser-known works as Verdi's *Un Giorno di Regno* and Rossini's *Cenerentola*, which still retain freshness and charm but which are not likely to reach actual performance because of the economic factors involved. Also available are lovely antiques, hitherto existing only as names in encyclopedias, such as Scarlatti's *Trionfo dell' Onore* and a madrigal opera by Vecchi, which though dramatic duds today more than justify their existence in musical terms.

Mounting sales prove that there is no slackening of popular interest in this heretofore untapped field. The public appreciates opera listening that is non-arduous. For this reason, company executives have provided handsome envelopes, informative notes, and librettos in the original language, in an English translation, or in both. (Whether these librettos are good or bad is another matter; what is important is that they heighten intelligent and happy listening. Where an English translation is not supplied, the *rapport* between the listener and the music is partially diminished).

In spite of good intentions, however, certain factors have been overlooked in planning for listener comfort, and the following suggestions should therefore be seriously considered by the numerous com-

panies involved in producing LP operas.

1 — It would be desirable to help a purchaser secure at a nominal price as many librettos as he wishes. For listening to opera is definitely a social experience enjoyed in the company of others. Completely relaxed listening thrives if each one in a group has a libretto for himself.

2 — LP operas could in a small way compensate for lack of visual pleasure if together with written descriptive material there were included some photographs of the participants, in costume and against sets in such cases where transcripts of real performances have been made. In their own day and in their own stiff way, the various *Victor Books of the Opera* attempted this.

3 — A fault common to some very well sung and recorded operas is their omission of spoken dialogue which carries along the action and helps to set off the musical portions properly. Granted that these sections are often dull and long, their complete omission makes for difficulties in plot comprehension and makes the music sound transitionless. Compression would do the trick. Fine examples that profit from intelligent editing but leave story and flavor intact are *Der Freischütz* (Deutsche Gramophone, 78 r.p.m.; LP version by Decca) or *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (London) which is complete as regards the music but which cuts unnecessary or repetitious dialogue. Also, there is Cetra's fine performance of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* with its inclusion of sufficient *recitativo secco* to give credence to the drama and better musical continuity.

There is no doubt in my mind that opera-on-records will in time help to popularize the live performance of opera, and that the opera, prematurely mourned as dead a few years ago, will bloom in a new renaissance. It will be interesting, too, to see the tail wagging the dog for once. Past success in a live performance will not, I think, be needed to ensure an opera's being recorded, but the recording may create enough popular demand to refresh the production of new operas and the revival of unjustly neglected ones.

Schoenberg's Quartets

SCHOENBERG: *Quartet No. 1 in D minor, Op. 7.* Alco LP disc ALP-1002. *Quartet No. 2 in F sharp minor, Op. 10;* Alco LP disc ALP-1003. *Quartet No. 3, Op. 30;* Alco LP disc ALP-1004. *Quartet No. 4, Op. 37;* Alco LP disc ALP-1005. Each disc \$5.95. **Kolisch String Quartet** with Clemence Gifford (contralto) in *Quartet No. 2.*

▲A DOZEN YEARS AGO, I travelled a long distance to hear these recordings, which had been privately made and circulated. There is no doubt that in issuing them on LP Alco has done a service to the archives of 20th-century music on records. The Kolisch Quartet (the original ensemble heard on these records) had been associated with this music almost from the days of its birth. When these recordings were made Schönberg supervised the performances, so an authenticity prevails in them. The tonal quality of these discs is somewhat dry and lacking in essential overtones, but it is only in the first quartet, with its lush, Brahmsian timbres, that the music seriously suffers.

The question arises — what real value do these works have for the general music listener? The Schönberg cult needs no urge to hear them. A dozen years ago, I was in awe of these compositions. Today, I feel that Schönberg's esthetic reasoning is full of gaping holes, and far from extending the limits of what music can say, he constricted them to a point at which it could say almost nothing. A claim made by his disciples (which I regard as sheer foolishness), is that Schönberg's "limits" represent the "music of the future." Let us test this theory, for "the future" of some of these quartets has already arrived.

Almost a half century has rolled by since the *D minor Quartet* (1904-05) was written. It is a long work in which the four movements of the classic quartet form have been merged into one. Today, it sounds exactly like the music of its time, being similar in spirit to the works that Strauss and Mahler were then writing, with the

difference between it and some of the latter's scores that it is a terrible bore. The fact so admiringly stated by the annotator that the first development section of this quartet is modelled exactly on the development of the Beethoven "Eroica" first movement seems to me a confession of poverty, rather than genius.

Schönberg was a master harmonist, but his great weakness was his form and rhythm. I know this opinion goes smack up against the proclamations of his admirers, who fill pages upon pages with descriptions of his formal ingenuity. But musical form, to my way of thinking, requires first of all genuine melody, of which Schönberg is barren. A melody is an organic unit capable of expressing an emotion. Now Schönberg's manipulations of the intervals between one note and the next seem to me communicating only different states of nerve tension, which being constricted in scope become monotonous. Furthermore, by abandoning key relationships he has forsaken one of the great foundations of formal structure. While I do not think the old system will last forever, I do not think that Schönberg has replaced it with anything better for the reflection of the experiences of life. For all the ingenious manipulations of notes that prevail in these quartets — the variations, crab canons and inversions — there is no compelling movement from one phrase to the next, no dramatic action, no climax, no development, no resolution. At the end of a movement, we are emotionally where we were at the beginning.

The *F sharp minor Quartet* (1907-08) seems to me to be the best selection for the listener who wishes an example of Schönberg's quartet writing. The textures are more clean-cut than in the *D minor* — some singing lines and listenable polyphony are present, and the two songs to words of Stefan George (which make up the last two movements, accompanied by the instruments in Mahler manner) have a true romantic sadness. The *Third Quartet* (1927), the first to be written in strict twelve-tone style, seems to be sheer mechanics, based on the classical four-movement quartet model. Its attempt at lightness and gaiety in the rhythmic

structure is belied by the tensions of the twelve-tone system.

The *Fourth Quartet* (1936) is according to Dika Newlin also in twelve-tone style, though Peter Yates in his record notes hints otherwise. The textures here resemble those of the *Second Quartet*. However, at the same time, Schönberg's "atomization" here reaches its apogee — a succession of musical moments with no organic connection, regardless of what is going on structurally on paper.

—Sidney Finkelstein

Bayreuth's "Parsifal"

WAGNER: *Parsifal* (complete); **George London** (Amfortas), **Arnold van Mill** (Titurel), **Ludwig Weber** (Gurnemanz), **Wolfgang Windgassen** (Parsifal), **Hermann Uhde** (Klingsor), **Martha Modl** (Kundry), and others, **Bayreuth Festival Orchestra and Chorus** conducted by **Hans Knappertsbusch**. London LP set LLPA-10, 6 discs, \$35.70.

▲THIS, the second complete music drama of Wagner to emanate from Bayreuth, represents a triumph of modern phonographic work. The recording quality is more consistent than in the recent Columbia *Die Meistersinger*, yet it should be noted that Bayreuth presents a problem which has not been completely solved. For the orchestra — though rich and full in tonal character — has not the overall freedom of quality that one finds in London's *Meistersinger*. Often, it sounds compressed and does not have the spaciousness in sound that is evidenced in the singing. The famous orchestral pit at Bayreuth was especially designed in its time for an effect which may be right in the opera house, but one wonders about its efficacy in recording. This is not to imply that the orchestral sound is not far ahead of any other obtained at the same source, but I recognize a peculiar condition that many pilgrims to Bayreuth have noted in the past. It would be idle to refute that London has not done a notable job in this assignment, but as one engi-

neer of our acquaintance said on hearing these records — "Wagner could hardly have had a true appreciation for high fidelity in the orchestra," which may or may not be a fact.

Parsifal is regarded by many as the crowning dramatic achievement of Wagner. The legend of the Holy Grail, so prominent in the mythology of the European, and especially the Celtic people, interested Wagner from early years and his *Lohengrin* was a forerunner of *Parsifal*, though chronologically the two works are separated by more than thirty years. Though the legend of the Holy Grail has appealed to the imagination of many poets, none have treated it more powerfully than Wagner. We are told the name *Parsifal*, in its Gallic form, signifies "Companion of the Cup," while the Persian form adopted by Wagner means the "Pure Simple." The character of the hero has been described as "that of a stainless, simple youth who passes unscathed through all temptation and learns the cause of the World's pain through Sympathy, or Compassion, which is the highest aspect of the Will. It then becomes the power to redeem, and its weapon is the sacred Lance, which should be separated from the Grail: for Will needs Wisdom to control and guide it." In the Prelude to the music drama — or rather Mystery-Play, for Wagner has actually "modernized" the medieval mystery-play — Wagner designates thematically the "great trinity" — Love, Faith, and Hope. In it, we hear "the gentle voice of loving compassion, the strong hymn of faith, the agonized cry of the stricken sinner, and the Hope of redemption." In his complete score, Wagner presents all these elements in lifelike music and drama.

Religious Symbolism

The religious significance of Wagner's drama has been open to ridicule and there are many who resent the operatic observance of Eastertide with performances of *Parsifal*. Whether the Catholic mind accepts or rejects the religious significance of *Parsifal*, its spiritual implications cannot be refuted. There seems little justification to disclaim these because of the

sensuous beauty of Wagner's music. For so-called religious ecstasy (manifest in more than one religious zealot whom the church has canonized) owed its impetus to a truly sensuous nature.

There can be few criticisms against the singers that form the cast of the present performance. Not since Michael Bohnen's Gurnemanz have I heard a more noble impersonation of this role. Ludwig Weber really makes the text live, and yet not even he can not keep that opening scene from seeming unduly lengthy. Windgassen's *Parsifal* is an intelligent and impressive impersonation — the character grows, as it should, with the drama — in unfoldment. In the opening scenes, he gives no intimation of the later fervor he brings to the part. Martha Mödl's Kundry is dark-hued in tone and not always effortless, but her absorption with the drama is impressive, though she does not summon sufficient vocal beauty for the *Herzeleide*. The Flower Maidens are a bit shrill on occasion, otherwise the choral singing is excellent, especially in the final scene. The Amfortas of George London is superbly sung with impressive nobility and anguish. One could not ask for a more villainous Klingsor than Hermann Uhde presents, and van Mill's Titurel has appropriate dignity. The orchestral direction of Knappertsbusch suggests more reverence and care with slower tempi than usual, but the fluency of his direction is consistent and he knows how to maintain a satisfactory balance. Such orchestral direction surely permits the singers to breathe more easily. Rightfully, everything builds for the finale, and even Knappertsbusch seems to husband his ardor for this — I find his handling of the Transformation Scene in Act I rather deliberate in pace and not as dynamic as others make it.

In the final analysis, one feels that this is a truly great Wagnerian performance, and one of the great operatic experiences from the phonograph. Each of its three acts can afford a unique experience for the listener, and playing them separately and on different occasions can permit a closer study and deeper appreciation of Wagner's intentions and achievement. —P.H.R.

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Record Notes and Reviews



THERE IS IN SOULS *a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.*

—William Cowper

Orchestra

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 73;*
London Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler.
London LP disc LLP-28, \$5.95.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 3 in F, Op. 90;*
Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam
conducted by George Szell.
London LP disc LLP-487, \$5.95.

▲THIS MAKES the sixth version of the *Second Symphony* and the fifth of the *Third* to be issued on LP. Characteristic of Furtwängler, the playing of the *Second* is highly refined and fastidious in detail. The quality of sound has consistent beauty, but the conductor's wayward alterations of tempo in the first and last movements are disturbing to one long familiar with this work. In the inner movements, he takes no liberties but plays them with a lightness and grace that are completely winning. The recording is more mellow in the LP version than in the original 78 rpm. Some of the bloom of London's *ffrr* technique is definitely missing. Of the several LP versions of Brahms' *Second*, I favor the Rodzinski and the Monteux, though neither has quite the charm of Beecham's older 78 March, 1952

issue. I certainly hope that Columbia will get Sir Thomas to replay this symphony.

In comparison with the Furtwängler performance of the *Second*, Szell's interpretation of the *Third* offers more admirably poised musicianship. Here, we have consistent beauty in sound, smooth phrasing and continual attention to detail — all accomplished in a sensible manner that never seems to say, "see how well I play this section." Of the five versions of this work on LP, this is the most satisfying as a performance and a recording. There is perhaps more warmth of beauty in Ormandy's second movement, for Szell is not one to lean heavily on poetic sentiment. I cannot remember when I have heard a more spellbinding effect at the opening of the finale than created by Szell. Clear, clean, realistic reproduction serves the conductor to advantage. —P.H.R.

CHABRIER: *Espana Rhapsody; ROSINI:* *La Cambiale di Matrimonio Overture;* Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia 10" LP disc AAL-11, \$2.85.

▲A REAL BARGAIN no matter how you look at it. . the delicious *Espana Rhapsody* and a coruscating overture from a forgotten opera by Rossini recently revived by Sir Thomas. Both are read impeccably.

ly and played with obvious relish. If one has any fault to find, it would be that the recording is slightly woolly in the last half of the Rossini and that the tympani are sometimes obscured in both selections.

—C.J.L.

DVORAK: *Symphony No. 4 in G, Op. 88; Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by George Szell.* London LP disc LLP-488, \$5.95.

▲IN OCTOBER 1948, Columbia issued Walter's performance of this symphony which later was reissued on LP. It is one of Dvorak's most characteristic works — idyllic and buoyant, suggestive of verdant fields and leafy groves. I've always felt that its composer could have borrowed and applied to this opus the title of Smetana's tone poem, *From Bohemian Fields and Groves*. In many ways, Szell is a more practical musician than Walter. He allows the music to speak for itself without interspersing personal touches that are not implied. This is wondrously clear orchestral playing which is due as much to the conductor as to London's knowing engineers. Szell does not permit the strings to dominate the ensemble and relegate to the background some of Dvorak's loveliest melodies in the woodwinds, as Walter did. Yet, even here, the first flute does not always stand out as clearly as one would have liked. But this is a performance and a recording that may well make new friends for Dvorak's music.

—P.H.R.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 99 in E flat; Symphony No. 101 in D (The Clock); Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen.* Westminster LP disc WL-5102, \$5.95.

▲ONLY Beecham has played Haydn's No. 99 on records, and his performance dates back to 1936. It is hard to understand the neglect of this work which has a most imposing opening movement, one of Haydn's most beautiful *Adagios*, and a finale with a surprising fugal development. Scherchen is less gracious in this music than Beecham, but in the first movement his substantiation of muscularity as well as grace gives strength to Haydn's purpose. The richness of

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beauty of the slow movement is well exploited in this splendid recording. There is more capriciousness to Haydn's minuet than Scherchen realizes and more comedy in the finale. He tends to solidity in the minuet perhaps to contrast the grace of the trio section. The orchestral playing is on the whole quite good, if not always achieving perfect unanimity. But this is a performance of a really wonderful symphony which one can enjoy. It is a most welcome addition to the Haydn library on records.

Scherchen's "Clock" is too metronomic for its own good. His reading is consistently four-square and lacking in the graciousness that others bring to this music. If the conductor aimed for substantiation of the "Clock" sobriquet, he has accomplished it with the relentlessly marked rhythm that conjures memories of an old fashioned "grandfather" clock. Maybe this is the way that the symphony was once performed and thus acquired its nickname. For richness of sound, Westminster realistic engineering has achieved the utmost in this performance of Haydn's "Clock."

—P.H.R.

MUSIC OF INDIA: from the sound-track of Jean Renoir's film, *The River*. Polymusic LP disc, PRLP 5003, \$5.95.

▲THIS DISC contains many of the virtues and most of the faults of the film. The music itself is quite splendid and manages to be representative of both south and north Indian classical music. If it occasionally seems to be a "concert performance" that is well within the confines of the movie which did not pretend to be a documentary. But, as in the film, there is occasional monotony: the "river song," for example, is heard in identical versions in five different places in the disc. Too, the recording contains the somewhat self-conscious *naïveté* of the film, particularly in "Harriet's story" where the mythological marriage, accompanied by lovely music, is conscientiously explained by the young lady. But, unlike most "movie music" this stands up quite by itself and, like the film, it can be of general interest. The transfer from the sound-track is successful.

—D.R.

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LISZT: *Todtentanz* (Dance of Death);
FRANCK: *Variations symphonique*;
Alexander Brailowsky (piano) with
RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Fritz Reiner (in the
Liszt) and Jean Paul Morel (in the
Franck). RCA Victor LP disc LM-
1195, \$5.45.

▲THE *Dance of Death* was a favorite motive of the Middle Ages and Liszt wisely selected the gloomy *Dies Irae* melody from the *Mass of the Dead* as the theme of his derisive variations which make up his *Todtentanz*. The work is said to have been inspired by Holbein's series of engravings similarly titled. A powerful virtuoso composition, *Todtentanz* boasts clashing dissonances, canonical variation, brilliant cadenzas and imposing glissandos, which all add up to a sort of theatrical show meaning little to this generation of listeners. Brailowsky and Reiner make a perfect team for an imposing performance of this blatant and would-be gruesome opus.

The poetic qualities of Franck's *Symphonic Variations* are far removed from Liszt's sardonic drama. Here, beauty dwells for its own edification. Here, the symphonic approach — treatment of the piano in conjunction with the orchestra — is pursued rather than the virtuoso. Brailowsky and Morel reveal many admirable musical qualities in this work, but neither seems completely sympathetic to its moods. Brailowsky's tone is rather dry for Franck's music while Morel's orchestral direction is more resilient. My own preference on LP goes to Anda and Van Beinum (Decca DL-9542).

The recording in both works is most realistic in the manner of others made by Victor in its 34th St. Studio, with overlapping resonance dangerously near to an echo on occasion and an actuality of wind instruments that is more showy than in the concert hall.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat, K.364*; **Walter Barylli** (violin), **Paul Doktor** (viola), **Vienna State Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Felix Prohaska**. Westminster LP disc WL-

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5107, \$5.95. The same; **Joseph Fuchs** (violin), **Lillian Fuchs** (viola), **Zimbler Sinfonetta** conducted by **Josef Zimbler**. Decca LP disc DL-9596, \$5.95.

▲THIS wonderful opus shows the maturity of Mozart's style in his twenty-third year, and certainly can be rated the greatest work that he had accomplished up to this time, as the annotator states. Whether this *sinfonia* can be called a double concerto or not remains a moot question. It is actually a "modernized" version of the old concerto grosso blended with the symphonic form — a daring work for its time, particularly since it was written in Mozart's last years at Salzburg. I do not think it aimed to disclose active revolt against an archiepiscopal court, as Eric Blom states, but rather an effort on Mozart's part to impress that court with "what he had learned of the monumental style in Mannheim and Paris," as Einstein says. I find the annotator clarifies this very well indeed, though his analysis of the music is rather diffuse.

We have never previously had renditions of this work comparable to these. The Hamilton Harty version came closest but it was not well recorded. Both of these performances are exceptional ones, conveying knowledge and understanding of the classical style of the music and musicianship of the highest order in the leading roles. Barylli and Doktor play with admirable unanimity of purpose and tonal blending, which does not make them standout as virtuoso soloists, something I do not think Mozart intended. While brother and sister Fuchs are equally proficient in their artistry, the smallness of the Zimbler ensemble does not serve as well as the Vienna orchestra. Moreover, the tighter precision of Zimbler's direction does not allow for the fluency and grace that Prohaska's expressive direction does. The beautiful, dark-colored texture of the music, as well as its passion, is best served in the Westminster version, for Prohaska achieves nuance in rhythm which, in my estimation, serves Mozart's music best. Both recordings are exceptional in qualitative realism.

—P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Bolero*; **BERLIOZ:** *Benvenuto Cellini* — Overture; *Le Corsaire* — Overture; *L'Orchestra de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris* conducted by Charles Münch. London LP disc LLP-466, \$5.95.

▲CAN IT BE by gentlemen's agreement or observance of French tradition that Münch adopts the slower, more smoothly measured tempo for *Bolero* which Ravel favored? Mengelberg did this and turned out a really first-rate, early edition of this piece. But Mengelberg had more dramatic thrust in his performance. Münch is not similarly inclined, though he very carefully defines each section and allows the accumulative instrumental effect to speak for itself. Not an exciting reading by any means, it is nonetheless admirable for its honest artistry if one does not feel — as I do — that *Bolero* remains a rather hopeless and empty cause. This is a re-issue from 78 rpm and somewhat more mellow in tonal quality than the original.

I believe the two Berlioz overtures are also re-issues from 78 rpm. The reproduction of *Le Corsaire* is better than that of *Benvenuto*, but both lose in woodwind quality though the strings have a gratifying mellowess. Berlioz's opera on Cellini was never a success. Its overture, one of the finest the composer left us, alone survives. J. H. Elliot in his book on Berlioz says, "Here, surely, is that 'Mediterranean music' for which Nietzsche sighed after a satiation of Wagner." The material for Berlioz's popular *Carnaval romain* was incidentally derived from *Benvenuto Cellini*, which helps us better understand the Nietzsche quote. The *Corsaire Overture*, based on Byron, is a brilliant and thrilling piece of work. Münch plays these works admirably — he has always been a conductor sympathetic to Berlioz's thoughts.

—P.H.R.

ROSSINI-RESPIGHI: *La Boutique Fantasque*; Royal Opera House Orchestra conducted by Hugo Ringold. Decca 10" LP disc DL-7518, \$3.85.

▲THIS IS the third recording of the Respighi ballet based on excerpts from Rossini. Labelled "a Sadler's Wells Ballet" presentation, it stems from the theatre

rather than the concert hall, and for this reason will probably appeal to balletomanes who favor authentic dance versions. The performance is a good one of its kind, but lacks some of the nuanced rubatti of the Ansermet version (London LLP-274). The reproduction has liveliness, but not much resonance. Some of the solo instruments are very far forward, especially the woodwinds.

—J.N.

SCARLATTI: *Concerlo No. 6 in F* (Strings); **TARTINI:** *Concerlo in E* (violin and strings); **VIVALDI:** *Concerlo in G* (cello, strings and cembalo); **ALBINONI:** *Sonata in G minor, Op. 2, No. 6* (strings); **Virtuosi di Roma**, conducted by Renato Fasano. Decca LP disc DL-9572, \$4.85.

▲WHEN the Virtuosi di Roma appeared in concert in New York in 1950, critics — formerly less friendly to the type of music they play — were loud in their eulogies. The technical and expressive efficiency of this ensemble are the result of its conductor, Renato Fasano, who assembled and moulded the group into an admirably polished unit. There are thirteen players, each of whom is a recognized, accomplished soloist in his own right — six violinists, two violists, two cellists, one bass player, one flutist and one cembalist. While Mr. Fasano is a recognized musicologist, his interpretative urge is freer than most and not primarily motivated by scholastic proclivities. In this, he differs from the German conductors of similar chamber ensembles. Mr. Fasano's Italian background has endowed him with a feeling for the warm-hearted temperaments of his forebears of the 17th and 18th centuries. The precision in his performances of the quick movements does not place an accent on technical brilliance nor speed, but includes a feeling for rhythmic nuance. His slow movements are poised, sweetly expressive, but not sentimentalized. He understands the value of classical serenity.

There have been no programs that I can recall of a similar nature which, heard at one sitting, sustain the listener's interest. In other cases, one felt that subsequent replays would be confined to

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separate compositions — but not so here. The Scarlatti concerto is performed by the Virtuosi di Roma with exceptional expressive beauty that does fullest justice to its symmetry and grace. The same can be said of the renditions of the other works each of which owns an attractiveness and individual profile to sustain repeated listening. The unfamiliar opus by Albinoni — a minor composer of his time — was assuredly deserving of revival. The recording has resonant fullness and naturalness of sound.

—P.H.R.

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 2 in C, Op. 61; Stokowski and His Symphony Orch.* RCA Victor LP disc LM-1194, \$5.72.

▲IT IS the fashion at best to deprecate Schumann as a composer of symphonies, nor can it be denied that his genius flowers best in his briefer expressions, the songs and piano music, which are suggestive and evocative and do not require to be grandly conceived and developed as does the symphony. Nevertheless, he is always the poet, passionate, personal, revealing, and romantic in the best sense of the word; it is as such that one should listen to him.

The *Second Symphony* sketched, as Schumann admitted, when he was "still in a state of suffering," expresses alternating psychical states — deep depression and uncertainty overlaid at times by deliberate and not too convincing efforts at sprightly cheerfulness. On the surface, when the brasses lend support or the strings sound in unison, it seems sturdy music, aggressive, possessing power and muscularity. Actually, it is tense, the tension latent in the first movement with its brooding and darkly overcast quality, and overt in the nervous scherzo of the second movement where either as the hunted or the hunter, the music scurries or flees, insistent, breathless, but compulsively never at rest. The slow third movement has a broad melody never developed sufficiently and an enervating heaviness which leads inconsequentially to a vivacious *allegro*, reminiscent of the healthy, positive tones of the opening of Mendelssohn's "Italian" symphony, but

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it relapses soon enough into a more natural melancholic vein.

Stokowski's direction pierces beneath the surface of the music. Here are dynamics, forceful but not strident, which emphasize the changing moods. Here is the proper pacing to keep the music from sounding banal. The recording as a whole is excellently balanced and the surfaces are unusually quiet.

—B.L.

STRAUSS: *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme; Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Richard Strauss.* Decca LP disc DL9576, \$5.85.

▲THE IMPORTANCE of having a composer's reading of one of his major works cannot be minimized; much can be learned in matters of pacing, phraseology, balance. Such evidence is here at hand and Decca tells us that there will be others from Richard Strauss coming up in the near future. It will be good, of course, to have these interpretations available for study by everyone. In the case of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, however, the recording is simply too weak for this disc to have any more than pedantic interest. Better try Reiner's version on a Columbia LP as the one to play often.

—C.J.L.

Concerto

BACH: *Three Concertos for Harpsichord and String Orchestra: No. 4 in A, No. 5 in F minor, No. 7 in G minor; Helma Elsner (harpsichord) with Pro Musica Orchestra, Stuttgart conducted by Rolf Reinhardt.* LP, \$5.95

▲THIS is a delightful disc capable of giving much pleasure. Elsner is a competent player and the Pro Musica Orchestra of Stuttgart under Reinhardt is more than adequate. There is a joy of playing here that manifests itself in rhythmic alacrity, transparent sounds, and no personal insistence of any kind. Pure of style, impeccably balanced, these performances have a musical health that rewards the listener. Rough playing here and there cannot blemish an otherwise worthy accomplishment. Excellent recording.

—C.J.L.

BARTOK: *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*; **William Primrose** (viola) with the **New Symphony Orchestra** of London conducted by **Tibor Serly**; Bartok Records LP disc, BRS 309, \$5.95.

▲WHEN BARTOK was twenty-four he wrote his mother: "We must attain a height from where we can view things with sober calmness, with complete indifference. It is difficult to acquire this ability. But to reach this height is the greatest triumph we can have over ourselves, over others, over all that is." He remained true to this goal all of his life and in this, his final work, reached its most perfect realization. Written concurrently with the third piano concerto, it shares with that work a simplicity that is rare in any music, but one would have to return to the early *Two Portraits* to discover the pure diatonic beauty of the two opening movements. These contain such thoughtful serenity that it is not surprising that the third movement, an extraordinary vivacious dance in the Roumanian style, has been criticized as failing to sustain the promise of the work. I don't think this is true. The great strength of this movement lies precisely in its utter contrast to the two preceding (all are played without pause), and in Bartok's innate genius in choosing precisely the right thing. Unlike some of his other finales, notably those of the violin and orchestral concertos, this one does not once fall down but sustains one of the most thrilling climaxes in all his work. The unity toward which he constantly strove is here perfected.

He could not complete the work, although his draft indicated all the notes. His friend, Tibor Serly, finished it so successfully that one must be told this to realize it. The performance does complete justice to the music. Mr. Primrose, for whom the work was written, has never played better. The recording is of the highest order, a splendid realization of a great work of music. —D.R.

MOZART: *Concerto No. 25 in C, K.503*; **Carl Seeman** (piano) with **Munich Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted

by **Fritz Lehmann**, and *Variations in G major on a Theme by Gluck, K.455*; **Carl Seeman**. Decca LP disc DL-9568, \$5.95.

▲I HAVE never been able to concur with those who claim that this concerto is disappointing, and that the performer is hardly repaid for overcoming its difficulties. It is an expansive work — majestic and almost as grandly ostentatious as the great *C major, K.467*, to which it is closely related. Carl Seemann is an impressive Mozart performer with a mellow tone and a smooth touch. His playing of the ornamental passage work is consistently fluent. I find his performance more appreciable than those of Gaby Casadesus or Kathleen Long, perhaps because he imparts an unmistakable personal enjoyment to his playing. Lehmann keeps the orchestral ensemble moving in a forward manner without losing sight of the expressive qualities of his assignment. The attractive variations are a welcome addition to the concerto. The recording is good but not quite at the same imposing level of most we get today. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Concertos No. 4 in D (K.418) and No. 6 in E flat (K.268)*; **Reinhold Barchet** (violin) and **Pro Musica Orchestra, Stuttgart** conducted by **Wilhelm Seegelken** (in No. 4) and by **Rolf Reinhardt** (in No. 6). Vox LP disc PL7240, \$5.95.

▲HERE are two of Mozart's loveliest concertos for violin and orchestra. *No. 4 in D*, very well known, has been recorded often; *No. 6 in E flat* seldom, if ever.

Barchet is a very capable player and brings to the music the brightness and sparkle that it demands. The violin tone is occasionally edgy, however, and the balance between soloist and orchestra has not been faithfully captured by the recording. Woodwind passages are rather often blanketed. The orchestra seems competent, but it plays with greater precision under Reinhardt than when it is directed by Seegelken.

One must return to the old Columbia version on 78s by Szigeti and Beecham for a completely effective performance of the *D major Concerto*. But there is more

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Mozart here than in the recent Schneider recording for Columbia. That factor coupled with the appearance of the fine *E Flat Concerto* on an LP may make this disc desirable to many in spite of its shortcomings.

—C.J.L.

Chamber Music

BACH: *Suite No. 3 in C* and *Suite No. 6 in D* for unaccompanied cello; **Janos Starker** (cello). Period LP disc SPLP-543, \$5.95.

▲YOUR reviewer and other members of this staff have more than once reported on the extraordinary abilities of Janos Starker. The present disc is further evidence of his remarkable powers. In my view, not even a Casals or a Fournier can surpass the playing one gets here. Different those worthies may be, but better at the present time, I think not.

Starker gives each section of these very difficult works shape, continuity, and a delicacy and robustness of expression wonderfully rare. Beautifully recorded, this disc should bring joy to those who love fine cello playing.

—C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in A minor, Op. 132*; **Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet**. Westminster LP disc WL-5104, \$5.95.

▲BEETHOVEN'S superb *Opus 132* which has already been thrice recorded by different groups on LP comes in for yet another interpretation by the distinguished Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet. The performance is unorthodox and may be disconcerting to those whose taste runs along well established grooves. To this reviewer, it unfolds new vitality and breadth and seems a logical extension and culmination of Beethoven's musical past.

The orthodox point of view holds that Beethoven, toward the end of his life, found in the quartet the ideal medium of pure musical design and that as *Opus 132* is music that is not outgoing but deeply reflective, tone color and instrumental display for their own sake play only a small part in it. In fact, it is conceived as the direct antithesis of the public ora-

torical manner of the "Eroica," and is frequently played as intensely personal "romantic" music, or when dance patterns prevail, in the charming "gallant" style.

The Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet refuses to think of Beethoven in this work as remote, introverted, soliloquizing before an empty house. In their rendition, what Beethoven has to say becomes integrated and greatly clarified, the personal imperceptibly growing into the universal, like a Hamlet soliloquy which includes the world in its troubled seekings. The pacing never falls into triteness nor is the last movement made to sound like a Viennese waltz. Beginning with the first movement, the music is made outwardly rather than inwardly dramatic, with a broad sweep and a marked melodic line. The second movement seems almost to drag when compared with the bouncier versions of others, but it lends support to the new conception which won this listener completely by the third movement. What emerges is a sumptuous sheen to the music, orchestral dimensions, distinctly audible contrapuntal effects, and a rational clarity in which the giant Beethoven is evident with his wisdom, compassion, and aura of mighty pronouncement. In the matter of technical reproduction, the recording is clear and beautiful. —B.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Serenade in D, Op. 25*; **Julius Baker** (flute), **Joseph and Lillian Fuchs** (violin and viola); **Trio in C minor, Op. 9, No. 3**; **Joseph, Lillian, and Harry Fuchs** (violin, viola, and cello). Decca LP disc DL-9574, \$5.85.

▲THE POWER of performance can be well nigh incredible. No one, for example, would be likely to consider either of the works presented here as top-drawer early Beethoven. The trio lacks a sense of unity, the serenade usually seems no more than a pleasant trifle. When, however, all the Fuchs and Julius Baker have finished pointing up this music's tiny delights and have during their performance kept you consistently interested in the whole idea of chamber music, it makes one wonder. If all this weren't enough, Decca

has provided a recording that has appealing fidelity.

—C.J.L.

GRIEG: *Sonata No. 3 in C minor, Op. 45*; *Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 8*; Joseph Fuchs (violin) and Frank Sheridan (piano). Decca LP disc DL-9571, \$4.85.

▲GRIEG'S chamber music does not sound the depths of the great composers, but tends to follow the pattern of his songful nature with rhythms often suggestive of folk derivation. In my estimation, there is more spontaneity in his first sonata, written in his twenty-third year, than in his third, written when he was forty-five. The latter is often called his "dramatic sonata," perhaps because of the emotional outbursts in the opening movement and the energetic character of the finale. Its slow movement, a romanza, is typical of Grieg's poetic songfulness. The first sonata has a rather innocuous opening movement, but its second — derived from Norwegian folk music — is one of the best things of its kind that Grieg wrote. The finale has a vigorous passion.

There are some of us who recall Kreisler's fondness for the *C minor Sonata*, which he recorded with Rachmaninoff. As much as I prize that older recording, I find the playing of Fuchs and Sheridan equally admirable for its fine musical impulse. Both of these gifted musicians are especially suited to ensemble playing and the unanimity of their work is most praiseworthy. I am glad that they also elected to record the *F major Sonata*, and I cannot think of two artists who would have done more justice to it. The recording is excellent for realism and tonal liveness as well as balance.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Six Quartets* (dedicated to Haydn) — No. 14 in G, K.387; No. 15 in D minor, K.421; No. 16 in E flat, K.428; No. 17 in B flat, K.458; No. 18 in A, K.464; No. 19 in C, K.465 (Dissonant); Roth String Quartet. Mercury LP set 8, 3 discs, \$14.55.

▲INASMUCH as this splendid group of quartets is offered for the first time by a single group, a greater burden falls on the players as well as on the company that

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sponsored them. The following comments, therefore, seem pertinent. Desirable as it may be to have a complete quartet on one side of an LP disc, to leave no grooves free between movements — as occurs here in Nos. 14, 18 and 19 — is undesirable space economy. Too, omitting repeats — especially in the inner movements of Mozart's quartets — often makes the music sound truncated. Such repeats in Mozart do not always mechanically mirror an established form but are instead an integral part of the musical pattern.

As a whole the playing is careful, workmanlike, and at times brilliant. Though competent individually, the players fall sometimes into the error of not submerging their individualities so as to meet the requirements of the music; this results in a gain of volume but loss in nuance.

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The ensemble, which has not played steadily together for a number of years, are now by no means perfectly fused into a unanimous group, hence their collective conception of Mozart does not clearly emerge. Moreover, their pacing and tonal values are ill balanced. Technically, the reproduction is life-like and noise-free.

There are better performances of all except the "Dissonant" quartet on LP discs — the Budapest Quartet in Nos. 14 and 15 (Columbia ML-4360), the Amadeus Quartet in Nos. 16, 17, and 18. —B.L.

MOZART: *Quartet No. 19 in C, K.465 (Dissonant); Quartet No. 23 in D, K.575; Guilet String Quartet.* Concert Hall LP disc 1130, \$5.95.

▲THIS disc contains Mozart's so-called "Dissonant" quartet, last of the "Haydn" quartets which the Roths have just recorded in their entirety, and the first of the Prussian quartets. The performances are well thought out, flowing in a smooth and polished style which is very pleasing to the ear. On occasion, they tend to be so meticulously correct that their precision has a metronomic, static quality. Technically, a very fine recording. —B.L.

RAVEL: *Quartet in F major; Pascal String Quartet; Sonata for Violin and Cello; Oscar Shumsky and Bernard Greenhouse.* Concert Hall LP disc CHS-1123, \$5.95

▲THE PASCAL is decidedly one of the most distinguished quartets now in our midst. Its performance of Ravel's famous quartet is a thoroughly honest and sincere musical demonstration, more inherently French in its finely blended string playing than any since the Pro Arte Quartet. Comparison with the recent Stuyvesant Quartet version is inevitable. I share Virgil Thomson's viewpoint that this music asks for more luxurious sound than the Pascals summon. The Stuyvesants brought this very quality to their performance and moreover achieved greater coloration. Ravel's quartet is a virtuoso opus and its climaxes demand such treatment. There are frequent points in the score at which the individual players of the Stuyvesant ensemble imaginatively

point up Ravel's thematic material in an unforgettable manner. Both performances are excellently recorded, but again the Stuyvesants win out in the greater liveness of their sound. One questions the advisability of placing this work on one side of an LP disc. The last movement in both recordings loses quality as a result of being confined to the inner, smaller grooves. Where Ravel planned intensity in coloration, much is lost as the bloom of the reproduction is taken off.

The sonata for violin and cello, a re-release dubbed from a previous subscribers' issue, owns more mellowness of tonal quality than the original. This is an amazing piece of workmanship, showing Ravel's ingenuity in form. It is music to live with, not for casual listening, as it lacks the poetry and the harmonic and contrapuntal richness of the quartet. The performance is remarkable for its brilliance and well coordinated musicianship.

—P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Sonata for Violin and Cello, MILHAUD: Second Sonata for Violin and Piano; Bela and Virginia Urban (violin and piano), Marcel Hubert (cello).* Classic Editions LP disc CE-1005, \$5.95.

▲HERE are two works new to LP. One, a four movement duo by Ravel, is of experimental nature and, I would say, rather uncharacteristic of the modern French master. It seems to be concerned only with the acoustical problems of the duo. Written about 1920, this duo does not appear to be very successful. Its major interest usually lies in its linear composition, not in harmonic or coloristic content. The work is modestly performed by Bela Urban and Marcel Hubert and recorded not too cleanly. (There is a better version issued by Concert Hall — see Ravel's *Quartet*.)

A better work of about the same vintage is Milhaud's *Second Violin Sonata*. Dedicated to André Gide, it has this French composer's characteristic melodic appeal, his warm, graceful, and humane expression. But it does not have any binding or unifying force that I can detect. I suspect that the work will have a difficult

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A quick check list of this month's new RCA VICTOR records

NEW RED SEAL PERFORMANCES

Eugen Onégin: Letter Scene (Tchaikovsky) and **Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5** (Villa-Lobos). Licia Albanese, Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra. WDM 1610, \$3.99. LM 142, \$4.67.

Symphony No. 1, in B-Flat, "Spring" (Schumann). Boston Symphony Orchestra, Charles Munch, conductor. WDM 1608, \$5.14. LM 1190, \$5.72.

Caprice, Op. 1, No. 24 in A Minor (Paganini). Mischa Elman. WDM 1625, \$2.83.

FPQ on the Air. 9 selections, including **Capriccio Espagnole** (Rimsky-Korsakoff), **Träumerei** (Schumann), **Danse Macabre** and **The Swan** (Saint-Saëns). First Piano Quartet. WDM 1624, \$5.14. LM 1227, \$5.72.

Double Concerto in A Minor (Brahms). Nathan

Milstein, Gregor Piatigorsky, Robin Hood Dell Orchestra, Fritz Reiner, conductor. WDM 1609, \$5.14. LM 1191, \$5.72.

A Jan Peerce Serenade. 8 selections. LM 143, \$4.67.

Ezio Pinza in Opera, Broadway and Hollywood. 8 selections. WDM 1655, \$5.14. LM 157, \$4.67.

A Treasury of Easter Songs. 20 selections. The Robert Shaw Chorale. WDM 1623, \$5.14. LM 1201, \$5.72.

Ten Tenors—Ten Arias. Bjoerling, Caruso, di Stefano, Gigli, Lanza, McCormack, Melton, Peerce, Svanholm, Tagliavini. WDM 1626, \$6.29. LM 1202, \$5.72.

SPRING COLLECTOR'S ISSUE

Encores by Casals. 11 selections. WCT 72, \$6.29. LCT 1050, \$5.72.

Schelomo (Bloch). Emanuel Feuermann, Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. LCT 69, \$3.99. LCT 14, \$4.67.

Concerto in D (Brahms). Heifetz, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Serge Koussevitzky, conductor. WCT 71, \$6.29. LCT 1043, \$5.72.

My Favorites, Vols. I and II. Fritz Kreisler. 6 selections in each album. WCT 63, WCT 80, each \$3.99. Together on Long Play, LCT 1049, \$5.72.

Concerto in D, Op. 21 (Haydn). Wanda Landowska. WCT 43, \$3.99. Also, **Concerto No. 26 in D, K. 537 "Coronation"** (Mozart). WCT 44, \$5.14. Together on Long Play, LCT 1029, \$5.72.

Operetta Favorites. Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. 8 selections. WCT 75, \$5.14. LCT 16, \$4.67.

Requiem Mass (Verdi). Ezio Pinza, Beniamino Gigli, other famous soloists. Royal Opera Chorus and Orchestra of Rome. WCT 68, \$12.06. LCT 6003, \$11.44.

Carnaval (Schumann). Sergei Rachmaninoff. WCT 66, \$3.99. LCT 12, \$4.67.

Die Schöne Müllerin (Schubert). Aksel Schiottz. WCT 78, \$9.75. LCT 1048, \$5.72.

Toscanini Conducts Beethoven: Prometheus Overture, Leonore Overture, Scherzo and Adagio from Quartet No. 16, in F, Op. 135. NBC Symphony Orchestra. WCT 65, \$3.99. LCT 1041, \$5.72.

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor (Beethoven). Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. WCT 67, \$5.14. LCT 1041, \$5.72.

Symphony No. 6, in F, "Pastoral" (Beethoven). Arturo Toscanini and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. WCT 70, \$6.29. LCT 1042, \$5.72.



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time holding one's interest. The performance by the Urbans lacks shape and personality. The recording is somewhat poor.

Also included on this disc are an arrangement of Hartman for violin and piano of Debussy's song *Il pleure dans mon cœur*, one of the *Ariettes oubliées*, and a portion of the Prelude to Ibert's 1923 opera *Le Jardinier de Samos*. The latter work is brief, but it has style, is well made and nicely played by Hubert.

—C.J.L.

SCHUBERT: *Octet in F, Op. 166; Vienna Konzerthaus Ensemble.* Westminster LP disc WL-5094, \$5.95.

▲OF ALL past performances of this entrancing work, this one seems to fill most satisfactorily the requirements of its most demanding admirers. Both as a musical performance and as a technical feat, it achieves a beautiful balance. The individual performers, seemingly more perceptive than those in other recorded versions of this work, show understanding of their proper relation to the music as a whole, so that they deserve praise not only as excellent individual performers but as a finely coordinated group.

Leisurely-paced and infinitely graceful, the *Octet* charms one into willing acceptance of its length, for which its contents are a little meager. Schubert's description of the work as "A Grand Symphonic Study" may well stand today, as it is an excellent example of what Schubert contributed to the symphony — the long, eloquent, ever-lyrical, but simple-as-daily speech melodies within the sonata form.

It may well be that the *Octet* is a little thin for its length, that it lacks originality in that it is modelled on Beethoven's early *Septet*, therefore adding nothing to the history and development of musical form, but one cannot help loving it and listening to it with pleasure all day long. —B.L.

TURINA: *Scène Andalouse;* **HINDEMITH:** *Trauermusik;* **VILLA-LOBOS:** *Duo for violin and viola;* **HANDEL:** *Passacaglia;* **Louis Persinger** (piano and violin) and **Rolf Persinger** (viola) with members of the **Stradivari Rec-**

ords Chamber Ensemble and String Quartet. *Stradivari LP disc STR608, \$5.95.*

▲THIS enforced "recital" has a number of things to recommend it, notably the pleasantly French-sounding work of the little-heard Turina. In two movements it moves effortlessly and a bit eclectically. The lovely 1936 Hindemith work, recorded in the original viola version, has appeared before on LP but this performance is superior. I personally prefer the stronger trombone version, authorized by the composer and splendidly played on Circle 51-100. The Villa-Lobos duo, written in 1946, is not one of the Brazilian composers most ingratiating works. Academic in structure and astringent in style, it exploits the possibilities of this chamber combination in a technical rather than musical fashion. Although the Handel is from the harpsichord suites it sounds very handsome in the Johan Halvorsen transcription for violin and viola. The Persingers are very conscientious artists and all their recordings display a high level of competence. The recording is acceptable.

—D.R.

Keyboard

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Sonatas No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13; No. 14 in C sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 2; No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57; Orazio Frugoni* (piano). Vox LP disc PL-7160, \$5.95. *Piano Sonatas No. 13 in E flat, Op. 27, No. 1; No. 20 in G, Op. 49, No. 2; Rondo in Capriccio in G, Op. 129; Variations on Die Ruinen von Athen, Op. 76; Rondos in C and G, Op. 51, Nos. 1 and 2; Hugo Steurer* (piano). Urания LP disc URLP-7033, \$5.95.

▲LOTS of Beethoven on these two discs. Frugoni (Vox) plays the popular works, the "Pathétique," the "Moonlight," the "Appassionata;" Steurer (Urания) plays somewhat unfamiliar works.

Of the two discs Frugoni's is rather the best. This young Italian-American has come a long way since he made his first recordings. He plays Beethoven with the

The American Record Guide

utmost clarity, a round singing tone, and splendid legato. If his feelings about the music are not of the Schnabel, Kempff, or Solomon fashion, his performances nevertheless are good, clean, sweet music making, and a fine antidote to the barnstorming one often encounters in these pieces. Having three such popular works on one record, adequately recorded, and quite well played may win for it many followers.

The *Urania* disc presents Steurer (presumably a well known German pianist) in his recording debut. His rhythm is not so invigorating, but his other musical equipment seems sound. Good technique, too. There is not a trace of hardness in his tone and he pedals a good deal better than what one is likely to hear during the course of a season of New York piano recitals. Of the works presented, I think there is pleasure to be gleaned from the *Op. 27, No. 1 Sonata* and the *Rondo in G, Op. 51, No. 2*. The others are really not very interesting; the *Sonata in G*, for example, was never intended by Beethoven for publication.

—C.J.L.

CHOPIN: *Polonaise No. 1 in C sharp minor, Op. 26, No. 1; Etudes No. 6 in E flat minor, Op. 10, No. 6, and No. 14 in F minor, Op. 25, No. 2; Waltzes No. 7 in C sharp minor, Op. 64, No. 2, and No. 10 in B minor, Op. 69, No. 2; Berceuse in D flat, Op. 57; Impromptu No. 1 in A flat, Op. 29.* Maryla Jonas (piano). Columbia LP disc ML-4476, \$5.45.

▲THIS is Maryla Jonas' fourth LP of divers Chopin pieces and I'm afraid it is no better than the others. Granted the lady has a lovely, pearly tone and that she never mistreats her instrument. However, I detected (even without referring to scores) quite a few obscured and faulty notes, misplaced accents, and some vagaries of tempi that were most uncommon. The recording is exceedingly good.

—C.J.L.

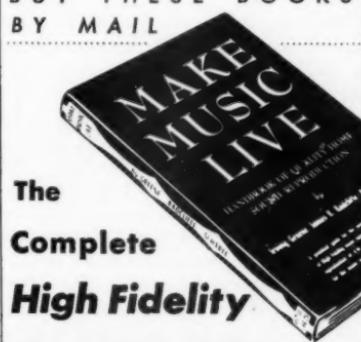
DEBUSSY: *En blanc et noir*; **STRAVINSKY-BABIN:** *Three Movements from Petrouchka*; Vitya Vronsky and Victor Babin (duo-pianists). Columbia LP disc ML4470, \$5.45.

March, 1952

▲IN HIS *En blanc et noir* Debussy created his personal solution to the problem of two-piano writing. This admirable three-part work has grand acoustical amplitude and a delicacy and vigor of musical thought unusually proportioned. Vronsky, Babin and the Columbia engineers have combined their talents to make this version the most telling on records.

Babin's arrangement of three sections from Stravinsky's ever wonderful *Petrouchka* are competent and evoke the original score's orchestral tints. Its importance, however, in comparison with the original, is that it adds a moderately

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effective piece to the limited two-piano repertory. Recording and performance here are also fine.

—C.J.L.

DEBUSSY: *Six Epigraphes Antiques; Petite Suite; Caroline Norwood and Eleanor Hancock* (piano-duo); *Lyri-chord 10"* LP disc, LL-21, \$4.75.

▲**DEBUSSY** wrote very few works for piano-duo. It was almost as though, master of the keyboard though he was, the black and white medium of four hands at the piano could not quite satisfy his intentions. It is not surprising that the first work here recorded is much better known in the Ansermet orchestration and that the second has enjoyed a lively popularity in the transcription by Henri Büsser.

The *Epigraphes*, which have been described as six bas-reliefs, were completed in 1914 and, though not particularly pianistic, remain one of the composer's minor masterpieces. André Suarès, who places the work among Debussy's greatest, says that "the music lacerates the imagination in all that it tells us of the musician and in what it leaves to be guessed . . . the short breath, the melody interrupted by spasms, broken by shocks, by contractions and trembling . . ." This rather subjective appreciation does not belie the fact that here, as in *Jeux* and the orchestral *Images*, Debussy arrived at a technical mastery and a structural simplicity which leaves his earlier reputation of "impressionist" far behind. Much earlier, and of almost no importance whatever, is the charming *Petite Suite* of 1889.

Misses Norwood and Hancock are quite acceptable. They play in well-balanced ensemble and possess the extreme articulation necessary for the music. The recording has a somewhat boxed-in sound but is faithful to the piano.

—D.R.

MOZART: *Sonata No. 17 in D, K.576; SCRIBBIN:* *Sonata No. 4 in F sharp, Op. 30; William Schatzkamer* (piano).

RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-156, \$4.45.

▲**THE MOZART** sonata dates from 1789 two years before his death. It was written for a royal amateur — Princess Friederike of Prussia. Sometimes called the "Trum-

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pet" sonata, because of its opening notes which sound like the call to a hunting-party, it is an ingenious work with considerable ornamentation. Mr. Schatzkamer's performance is quite straightforward and exceptionally clean-cut. I question the annotator's remark that it is in the big tradition of the composer, for I believe that Mozart would have played it with more nuancing of line. The Scriabin is worlds removed from the Mozart. The latter, issued on 45 rpm in April 1950, seems to have lost some of its brightness in quality in the transfer to LP. Schatzkamer does not achieve the smoothness in rhythm that did the late Katherine Heyman — the last of the true disciples of the composer, though his performance is by far the best we have had on records since Miss Heyman.

The piano tone in both works tends to brittleness but is free of tonal wobble.

—P.H.R.

SCARLATTI: *Sonatas; Fernando Valentini* (harpsichord); Westminster LP disc WL 5106, \$5.95.

▲**WHEN** it comes to Scarlatti, Valentini is in a class all by himself. There is no one else with such superlative technique tempered by such restraining artistry. The nearest approach to this recorded performance is that made by Landowska years ago. The similarity, however, is mostly through reason of their mutual precision and articulation, for hers did not contain such smoldering fire along with such sweetness and light. Valentini mirrors all the numerous aspects of Scarlatti's musical character, the extraordinary ferocity as well as the graceful charm.

His selection is both representative and unusual: Longo Nos. 37, 204, 252, 269, 279, 345, 395, 415, 430, 449 and 500. He juxtaposes early with late sonatas so that the simple part-writing of the former makes very sharp contrast with the amazingly modern sound of the complex later works. As the recording is a model of tonal faithfulness this will remain the definitive performance for some time to come. A second volume of sonatas appears next month.

—D.R.

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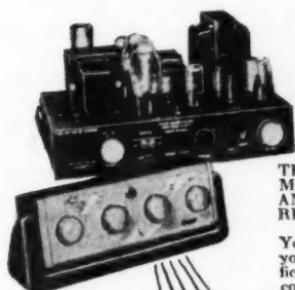
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SCHOENBERG: *Variations on a Recitative, Op. 40*; **MESSIAEN:** *Le Banquet Celeste, Transport de Joie, Prière du Christ*; Clarence Watters (organ).

Classic Editions LP disc CE1004, \$5.95.

▲JUST a few years ago it would have been difficult to imagine a world where record companies recorded late Schönberg works in duplicate. It is not too uncommon now. Mason, on an Esoteric LP, recently gave us a fairly clean reading of Schönberg's only work for organ. Now here is another and somewhat better version by Clarence Watters, head of the music department at Trinity College, Hartford. It is more effective, I believe, because of the organ used. The quite complex passages in the treble clef and above the staff with which this 1943 vintage work abounds do not (on the Trinity Chapel Organ) blot out the bass figures which give the work its momentum and provide its basic structure. Being able to hear the original theme (in this case a recitative of some length) in its different guises throughout the course of the work is absolutely essential for the music to make any sense whatsoever. These variations are thorny at best, and it is a testimony to Watters' technical skill that he makes them so easy to grasp.

Just as much skill is required to put across the divers Messiaen works particularly the *Transport de Joie*, a finger-breaking assignment if you ever heard one. Watters emerges unscathed here, too, and lends to the music that exotic, ecclesiastical aura that Messiaen continually attempts to evoke. Those who own the Stokowski recording of *L'Ascension* will recognize the *Prière du Christ* here presented as the material from which the orchestral version was made.

Classic Edition's recording of all these works is very good indeed. —C.J.L.

LP disc 201, \$5.95.; *Secular Works of Dufay*, EMS LP disc 206, \$5.95.; *Secular Works of Josquin des Prez*, EMS LP disc 213, \$5.95.

▲EMS deserves praise in presenting *Pro Musica Antiqua* under the discerning and discriminating direction of Safford Cape. Cape is an outstanding authority in music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. He has performed a scholarly job of research, resurrecting texts, reviving old instruments, ascertaining musical styles in so far as all these may be re-determined. In addition, he himself writes compendious and readable notes to accompany each recording.

To date EMS has issued three LP releases of a projected 41 discs, all under Cape and *Pro Musica Antiqua*. They leave nothing to be desired in the way of performance and technical reproduction, but they do leave the reviewer at a loss for words to do justice to their beauty, subtlety, and variety. So well balanced are the choices on each LP that aside from overjoying musical specialists, they delight the layman by exquisite solo singing, blending of voices and strange instrumental timbres, and by presenting through music a rich and varied tapestry of the times each represents.

EMS 201, featuring music of the 12th and 13th centuries, introduces us to songs both secular and religious; works of the rhapsodic Leoninus, the classical Perotinus — French masters of the decorative Organum; troubadour and minstrel songs with their graceful lines and melodic ornamentation. Viols, recorders, lutes, minstrels' harps are the accompanying instruments. These are not melodies such as are familiar to us, but they have a charm of line that will tempt many of us to imitate them. Among them, numbers 10 and 20 are referred to by Cape as thirteenth century jazz.

EMS 206 features Dufay — a name to be conjured with in his time (1400-1474), illustrious and beloved, acclaimed in the courts of France (Charles VII and Louis XI), Italy (Medicis), Sicily (Rene of Anjou), Burgundy (Philip the Good and Charles the Bold). For his sacred and popular songs, he employed all the crafts-

The American Record Guide

Voice

PRO MUSICA ANTIQUA under the direction of Safford Cape; *Music of the 12th and 13th Centuries*; EMS

manship of the past, added his own embellishments, and laid the path for the future. Sweet and original, possessing breadth and proportion, his works are instinct with refinement, purity, and grace. The selections included reflect his three periods, the first influenced by Johannes Ciconia, the second by Dunstable, the third by Ockeghem. They take the form of May songs, courtly songs of love, drinking songs, etc. These must be heard to be appreciated.

EMS 213 ushers in Josquin des Pres (1450-1521), pupil of Ockeghem, the "Prince of Music," a mighty Renaissance figure, grave or bitingly satirical in different selections, a man of the Church, serious in his religious pieces but of the world worldly in secular works. This is music that has breadth, passion, and great elegance of form.

If these three LP's we have a preview of what is to be expected in forthcoming releases by Pro Musica Antiqua. Music listeners have much to look forward to.

—B.L.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Song of the Forests*, Opus 81; Petrov (tenor), Kilichevsky (bass); Children's Choir, Mixed Choir, and State Orch. of U.S.S.R. conducted by E. Mravinsky. Vanguard LP 422. \$5.95.

▲IN "Song of the Forests," Shostakovich has written a fresh and inspiring work, which while conforming to Soviet artistic requirements nevertheless has universal appeal. His theme, a healthy one, is the vast reforestation program undertaken in the Soviet Union, and as the project involves masses of the population, he has given parts in his work to them all — children's choir, mixed choir, soloists, and orchestra. It is an imagination-catching idea he develops, similar to *Johnny Appleseed* or the Pare Lorentz film *The River* (which celebrated the wonders effected by controlled water power).

Musically, Shostakovich has effected a fusion since his view is panoramic — folk themes side by side with popular music, modal patterns, a strongly etched fugue in the last movement, and broad, powerful choruses in a more modern vein. He has

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drawn on the people and their work for a theme and has presented them in turn with a work which while artistically of a high order can easily be performed by amateur groups.

Technically, the recording is immensely successful, Vanguard having polished smooth the rough spots in the original tapes. The performance itself is alive and compelling, arousing contagious enthusiasm. Individual solos are beautiful in themselves and in their rendition by the singers, and the work in its entirety demonstrates Shostakovich's mastery of orchestral scoring and his ability to blend many musical elements into a powerful and poignant whole.

—B.L.

STRAUSS, J.: *One Night in Venice*; Esther Rethy, Karl Friedrich, Kurt Preger, Hugh Mayer-Gansbacher and other soloists of the Vienna State Opera, the chorus of the Bregenz Festivals, and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anton Paulik. Columbia LP set SL-119, 2 discs, \$10.90.

▲THE EFFECTIVENESS of recent recordings of *Die Fledermaus* has been used as a springboard to launch LPs of other Johann Strauss operettas. Here we have *One Night in Venice*, a seldom heard work as far as American audiences are concerned, moderately well recorded in a very stylish performance. Though there are no outstanding voices here, one does encounter a winning *esprit de corps* and a sort of know-how for this music that apparently flourished only in Vienna.

The operetta itself, which dates from 1883, is not quite up to the level of the more familiar Strauss stage works. The successful formula, both musical and dramatic, is easy to recognize; but there is seldom the invention present that helps make *Fledermaus* and *Gypsy Baron* so enjoyable. Acquaintance with the best of Johann Strauss would seem to be in order before trying the less rewarding *One Night In Venice*.

—C.J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *Symphony of Psalms*; London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir conducted by Ernest An-

sermet. London 10" LP disc LPS 331, \$5.95.

▲THIS is a re-issue from 78 rpm, and a most respectable job. I am not one who resents the loss of highs in such transfers, particularly if the aural prospectus is undisturbed in balance. For those who admired the Ansermet performance this release should prove most welcome. It has more ear appeal than the Stravinsky version. Yet, the composer's own interpretation has an imposing quality of authentic statement that impresses. It does not aim for tonal appeal but for musical expression. It is a matter for individual selection. In either case, the listener will acquire a worthy performance of one of the composer's greatest scores.

This work is not rightfully a symphony — it combines the choral with the symphonic approach. Its three movements are based on various Psalms, which the listener might do well to look up. The first is a Prayer, quite austere; the second deals with Thanksgiving and is quite exciting in its fugal structure; the third, a Hymn of Praise, is the longest and most appealing section of the work. —P.H.R.

THIS IS PARIS: written by Pierre Crenesse and Gerald Kean; Vox LP disc PL 7170, \$5.95.

▲THIS elaborate montage of sound was devised to honor the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Paris. It contains eulogies by Eleanor Roosevelt, Edward G. Robinson, Claude Dauphin, André Maurois, Christian Dior and Josephine Baker; the sounds of Paris as typified by street-monsters, the taxis, the bells of Notre-Dame and the snippings of Dior's seamstresses; and mementos of great events, Churchill's announcement of the German defeat as well as Franklin Roosevelt's charming speech to the people of France, in French. It also includes snatches of Berlioz and Offenbach as well as numerous popular songs sung by Jacqueline Francois, Henri Salvador, Edith Piaf, Maurice Chevalier and Miss Baker. All this and a lot more make up a rather *chi-chi* package (cover by Raoul Dufy), designed to go over big with the American tourist, actual or would-be. And for a good cause, the

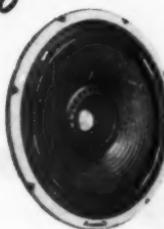
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—D.R.

READINGS FROM THE BIBLE: **Ronald Colman**; Victor LM-124, \$4.67. **▲**ON first sight, this may seem like a strange record for an actor to make. But it takes only a few minutes of listening to convince one that the artist was well chosen.

Mr. Colman does not preach. He reads and interprets the selections from the Bible with proper dignity and reverence.

The passages selected are a fair cross-section of the Bible's literature, and they have much expressive appeal. They are: Chapter 1, Verses 17-27 from the *Second Book of Samuel*; Chapter 28, Verses 12-28 from the *Book of Job*; *Psalms 8, 19, 23, and 121; Ecclesiastes*; Chapter 11; Chapter 2, Verses 8-14 from the "Song of Solomon"; Chapter 2 from *First Corinthians*; selections from the *Book of Proverbs*; and Chapter 21, Verses 1-7 from the *Revelation*.

—E.A.

Other Reviews

BACH: *Sonatas for Flute and Harpsichord* — No. 1 in B minor; No. 2 in E flat; No. 3 in A major; No. 4 in C major; No. 5 in E minor; No. 6 in E major; **Julius Baker** (flute) and **Sylvia Marlowe** (harpsichord). Decca LP set DX-113, 2 discs, \$11.70.

▲IN November 1950, we had these six sonatas played by Bertrand Caraté and Marcel Charbonnier (Vox PL-6160). At the time, I discussed briefly these works — two of which, the *E flat* and *A major* — I have never grown fond of. The performances of the two French artists (flute and harpsichord) were completely enchanting, more in the true chamber style of these works. With all of Baker's wondrous beauty of tone and Miss Marlowe's competent harpsichord playing, these performances do not quite capture the charm and expressive intimacy of those by the French artists. There is per-

haps no finer flutist playing today before the public than Julius Baker, but he has not quite yet achieved the nuanced refinement requisite to chamber music. This was borne out in his recordings of three flute quartets of Mozart (Oxford 101). I am sure if I had not known the performances of the French players, I would be greatly swayed in favor of these, for Baker's musicianship is ever admirable. Yet, even so, I could hardly forget some older performances like those of LeRoy and Albert-Leveque of the lovely *E minor* and *E major Sonatas*, formerly available on Musicraft records. They remain among my chamber music treasures.

Decca has provided clear, realistic reproduction for the artists. —P.H.R.

DVORAK: *Trio in F minor, Op. 65; Louis Kaufman* (violin), **Marcel Cervera** (cello), and **Artur Balsam** (piano).

Concert Hall LP disc CHS-1117, \$5.95. **▲**THIS is an extraordinary trio, with breadth and unusual passion. It was written in 1883, two years before its composer's *Second Symphony*. As in the latter opus, Dvorak's individuality is manifested, though one often feels Brahms' guidance of his hand. The trio is in the usual four movements, all of which have a deep seriousness not found throughout his other trios. The performance by three talented musicians — drawn together, so to speak, for an occasion — is a fine one, suggesting careful preparation. The recording is realistic in tonal quality and on the whole well balanced. —J.N.

HANDEL: *Sonatas Nos. 13, 14 and 15* — in *D major*, *A major* and *E major*; **Mischa Elman** (violin) and **Wolfgang Rosé** (piano). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1183, \$5.45.

▲ELMAN'S style is not ideally suited to these classical sonatas. In the slow movements, he does not seem at ease and the playing tends to drag on occasion. There is more nobility to the opening *Adagio* of the *D major* than we hear in this recording, and the lovely *Larghetto* should soar near the end. Goldberg and Moore (Decca DL-8504), who give the unsurpassed performance of this sonata in my estimation,

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acknowledge the crescendo marking at the end of the *Larghetto* in a manner that remains memorable. Mr. Elman is happiest in the fast movements. Despite many rhythmic idiosyncrasies, Schneider and Kirkpatrick (Columbia ML-2151) are closer to the style of Handel than is Elman in the *A major* and *E major Sonatas*. The recording is satisfactory but not unusual, and the balance sometimes favors the violinist.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Quintet in E flat, K.614;* *Quintet in G minor, K.516;* **Budapest String Quartet with Milton Katims (viola).** Columbia LP disc ML-4469, \$5.45.

▲THE PERFORMANCE of the *E flat Quintet* is new that of the *G minor* dates from December 1942. The dynamic gradations of the recording are better in the former, but the quality of the latter seems to have bettered in its transfer to LP being on the whole smoother and more uniform.

The *E flat Quintet* is the absolute antithesis of the *G minor*. It is completely songful, almost carefree, and without the disturbing passion of its predecessor. It seems strange that Mozart in January of the year of his death (1791) should have produced a work like this. There are passages in this quintet which suggest the spirit of Papageno, whose music was to be written later that year. Mozart's progress can be marked in all his music, and it is not surprising to find that the *E flat Quintet* in invention and craftsmanship supercedes the *G minor*, which was written four years earlier. One should live with this opus really to speak knowingly about it. Though I have become familiar with it in the Vienna Konzerthaus Quintet's version (Westminster WL-5007), I have never felt that performance did full justice to the happiness and humor of the music. The Budapest Quartet and Mr. Katims convey the elative spirit of this music far better. The playing of the ensemble is not, however, as smooth as one might like. The first violinist tends to be tonally rough and often needlessly tense. Yet, the effect of ensemble here is much better than in some recent record-

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ings from the Budapest group. Stylistically one feels the players on the whole serve the music better than the previous group, which makes the recording worth acquiring.

The ensemble playing in the *G minor* is much better, though even here some tenseness in the first violin is noticeable. But the interpretation is an exceptionally fine one, aimed more to exploit the music's emotional qualities than technical polish. Only in the menuet do I feel the tempo adopted by the Budapest group a bit fast to probe fully the emotional depth. In my estimation, the happiest alliance of polish and emotion has been achieved by the Amadeus group (Westminster 5086).

—P.H.R.

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RACHMANINOFF: *Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13; Stockholm Radio Orchestra conducted by Jacques Rachmilovich.* Mercury LP disc MG-10111, \$4.85.

▲**RACHMANINOFF** was twenty-seven when he wrote this symphony, which because of a disastrously poor performance at its premiere became consigned to oblivion. Perhaps, because of this fact, much of this music seems anticipatory of the composer's later works. Indeed, we are told that the composer used some of its ideas in later scores. It is not possible to form a clear conclusion of this music from a couple of hearings of the recording, particularly without a score. Rachmaninoff employed a motto theme throughout the score, far more than he did in any other composition. The influences of Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky and Borodin are present, but the manner of the writing — with the long themes hovering around single tonalities — are characteristic of the composer. There is much beauty of thought, notably in the slow section, and some awkward dramatic sequences. Indeed, the writing varies between a groping feeling for dramatic depths and downright arid stretches. The mood often suggests an emotional uncertainty, even despair, and it is quite understandable that he became obsessed with psychopathic fears after its failure. The orchestration is often muddy and harmonically there seems little that could be called venturesome. Yet, one does not feel that this symphony deserved to be forgotten these long years; it is not so far behind his *Second Symphony* in musical qualities. Rachmaninoff once said, "I try to make my music speak simply and directly that which is in my heart at the time I am composing." If that heartfelt quality seems less simple and direct than the composer thought it, it is because we cannot be aware of his true feeling at every change of mood. He leaned rather heavily on sentiment, and those who like his emotional precepts should surely hear this work.

The performance seems to be a particularly sympathetic one. Rachmilovich's abilities as a conductor of Russian music

are here, for the first time on records, done justice to, for the recording is rich sounding and tonally realistic. —P.H.R.

SAINT-SAENS: *Haranaise, Op. 83; Jascha Heifetz (violin) with RCA Victor Symphony conducted by William Steinberg.* RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3694, \$1.10.

▲**HEIFETZ** recorded this composition with Barbirolli in England some years ago. His playing is still amazing for its virtuoso skill, but he misses some of the languishing, voluptuous qualities of the music which have suggested to some (Auer among them) that this piece has Moresco-Spanish sources. Whether the theme is of genuine Spanish origin or not is anyone's guess—however the characteristic triplet with two successive eighth notes, as Auer states, is typical. When Saint-Saëns wrote this work Spanish pieces by French composers were very much in vogue. Excellent recording. —J.N.

SCHUMANN: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 54; Monique Haas (piano) with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Eugen Jochum.* Decca 10" LP disc DL-7522, \$3.85. The Same; *Guiomar Novaes (piano) with Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Otto Klemperer.* Vox LP disc PL-7110, \$5.95.

▲**CLARA SCHUMANN** set the style for this concerto and there are those who believe that this work rightfully belongs to women pianists. Here we have two exceptionally gifted female artists whose styles vary considerably. Monique Haas with her Gallic refinement tends to be more restrained than Guiomar Novaes, her coloring of tone is more subdued and her interpretation more intimate. Jochum's orchestral direction is warm-hued and sympathetic. Novaes is more imaginative in her playing with her improvisatory style. There is strength of purpose in her opening movement, delicacy in the Intermezzo, and luminosity in the finale. Klemperer's orchestral direction, however, is temperamentally far less in accord with Novaes than Jochum's with Haas. Moreover, the playing of the Vienna Symphony

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is tonally rough in comparison with the Berlin Philharmonic. Neither of these performances quite achieve the blend of sturdiness and poetic refinement of the Lipatti-Karajan version (Columbia ML-2195). As recordings, the Haas-Jochum is the smoother and best balanced, but the Vox has more tonal brightness.

—P.H.R.

STRAUSS: *Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 8; Siegfried Borries and Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin conducted by Arthur Rother; Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra; Erich Ertel and same orchestra and conductor. Urania LP disc 7032, \$5.95.*

▲STRAUSS'S violin concerto stems from his seventeenth year (1871-72); the oboe concerto was written in 1945, four years before his death. The latter is a striking work of its kind, amazingly full of youthful spirit, a sort of blend of Viennese rococo and a quasi-classical style.

The violin work, and eclectic score, is rather pretentious with a great deal of over-emphasis in the orchestration. Someone once aptly said (I believe it was Ernest Newman) that in Strauss's symphony and this concerto there is more evidence of youthfully taut, whip-cord nerves than true emotion. The writing for the violin shows proficient knowledge of the instrument, but the orchestral part is tense. Strauss always seemed ill at ease in the classical forms. The opening movement seems unduly long and far from adventuresome, the Lento rather reminiscent of Schumann, while the rondo owns a buoyancy and sprightliness which points forward to *Till*. This finale is the most spontaneous and convincing part of the work, though the accompaniment is far less resourceful than in his oboe concerto. Mr. Borries is a proficient performer with a pleasing tone, but the playing of the orchestra is somewhat rough and not too well balanced in clarity of instrumentation.

Mr. Ertel is hardly the solo oboist *par excellence*, he plays too much on one level of tone and has little of the sensitivity of Eugene Goossens (who recorded this work for British Columbia). Nor is the orchestral accompaniment well played, much of

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the instrumentation being obscured. Perhaps the derivation from radio prevented better detailed qualities in both works. The recording is quite realistic in both cases but lacking in concert hall depth.

—P.H.R.

WALDTEUFEL: *Trés Jolie Waltz; Espana Waltz; Estudiantina Waltz; STRAUSS, Joh.: Brautschau Polka, Op. 417; Furioso Polka, Op. 260; Ritter Pasman Polka, Op. 362; Die Fledermaus — Polka, Op. 362; Krapfenwaldl Polka, Op. 336; Um Sturmschritt Polka, Op. 348; Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1226, \$5.45.*

▲THE ENVELOPE bears the title "Waltzing with Waldteufel," which im-

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plies dancing to these performances. The smooth and sparkling playing of the Boston Pops, under Fiedler's knowing direction, is more appropriate to listening — dancers hardly expect such luxurious sound, anyway they would miss some of the niceties of the renditions. The Strauss *Polkas* are marked Vol. 2. As in the previous collection, Fiedler shows his efficiency in lively, well paced performances. Victor's engineering is top-drawer — well balanced and tonally realistic.

—J.N.

WEBER: *Overtures to Euryanthe, Preciosa, Oberon, Peter Schmoll und seine Nachbarn; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Karl Böhm.* London LP disc LLP 354, \$5.95.

▲THESE are the best performances of the first three overtures on LP to date. Böhm gives smoothly paced and wonderfully delineated readings of these works, showing his long association with the operas. For all of von Weber's overtures are derived from thematic material from his operas. *Preciosa* was written as incidental music to a play on gypsy life, while *Peter Schmoll* is the overture to an early, comic opera. The latter is quite a piece with a rich introduction and some froth, but it is worth knowing. *Euryanthe* and *Oberon* need no introductions. The sound of the Vienna Philharmonic is richly resonant, though the reproduction is not startling for high fidelity sounds. —J.N.

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 198)

▲Ever since English Decca, or London in this country, introduced the term *ffrr* (full frequency range recording) the public has been high-fidelity conscious. Extended-range reproduction has become more and more familiar in the past couple of years, and Westminster has set a pattern of reproductive sound which this enterprising concern has labelled "Natural Balance." This term seems exceptionally well chosen, as the clarity and tonal brightness of Westminster's recordings in the

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past year have a naturalness of tonal quality and a generally equitable balance.

Some months back, Capitol records issued some recordings — made in France — in which it was quite evident that this concern had adopted new methods of reproduction. This latest type of engineering has been given a label by Capitol, "Full dimensional Sound." The significant high-fidelity range, Capitol states, lies between 4,000 and 8,000 c.p.s., and the claims of this company are that its new records faithfully and clearly reproduce this range, "plus those important overtones needed to provide a balanced, lifelike reproduction." Furthermore, Capitol states that "only those recordings which meet the rigorous Capitol Full Dimensional Sound standards will carry the *FDS* seal." Competition in hi-fi reproduction is becoming quite keen.

Recently, Capitol signed exclusively the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under the direction of William Steinberg. The first *FDS* recordings from this conductor and orchestra will be distributed in April. They will be Beethoven's *Sixth Symphony* (Capitol S-8159) and Schubert's "Unfinished" and *Second Symphonies* (Capitol S-8162).

The Mail These Days

▲We are aware that many waited a long time for their February issue. We have been endeavoring to push publishing date forward for months, but have been stymied by circumstances beyond our control. The mails are extremely erratic, some readers in our vicinity (New York and neighboring towns) received the Feb. issue before the end of the month, others got it early in March. The issue was mailed on February 21. Mail service is slow and losses in the mails are heavy. Making up losses has forced several issues out of print. These days, there does not seem to be anything one can do about it. If the issue for a given month did not include a majority of the latest recordings we would feel that our readers were being poorly served; if we published earlier, reviews of these latest recordings would not appear until the following month. Many record concerns do not send review discs to periodicals until after their ap-

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pearance in shops. Sometimes, we as well as others wait several months before receiving review copies. There is a theory in the trade that a lot of people will buy a new recording, good, bad, or indifferent, and that the first supply of new records should therefore be pushed out to stores to catch this trade. There does not seem to be anything we can do about it, and we certainly do not think reviewing records from a dealer's booth is a fair way to serve the discriminating record buyer today.

▲In case some readers do not know, there was a strike in the record industry which seriously curtailed reproduction during December and January. While this has been settled, production is not to standard as yet. Hence, many major releases of February have not reached us, though, we are told, some of them have been in the stores. The Ormandy version of Berlioz's *Symphony Fantastique*, Beecham's "Unfinished" and a Mozart symphony, as well as others, have not come our way. Nor were we able to find them in several stores. It is possible to review from test records, if one cares to visit a company's office, but this, we have found, is an unsatisfactory procedure, for often test records are worn. It is the finished product in which the record buyer is interested, and we too, as only from this record can we safely and honestly report.

Recent "Pops" Releases

Mercer: *Top Banana*; Original Broadway Cast, starring Phil Silvers; Capitol S-308, \$5.72.

▲A lively performance, with a genuine stage atmosphere suggesting an actual performance. Not the most original score Johnny Mercer has ever put together but certainly a very pleasant one. The singing is generally good, according to Broadway standards.

Rodgers: *Pal Joey*; Members of the original cast, with Jane Froman and Dick Beavers. Orchestra and chorus *March*, 1952

conducted by Max Meth; Capitol S-310, \$5.72.

▲Not an "original cast" performance but nonetheless a top notch one, which is not surprising when the principal parts are in such capable hands as those of Helen Gallagher, Jane Froman, and Dick Beavers. It always will be a matter of wonderment how Richard Rodgers could have been inspired to write such splendid music around such an unsavory character as Joey. Good, live recording!

Aaron Slick from Punkin' Crick: Dinah Shore, Robert Merrill, Alan Young, with Henri Rene and Hugo Winterhalter and their orchestras; Victor LPM-3006, \$2.62, or WP-342, 45's, \$3.93.

▲Music with a country flavor, perfectly in keeping with the story of this Paramount picture. Nothing earth-shaking as movie-music but how could it fail to be entertaining and pleasant with three such protagonists? Incidentally, they are the actors in the film, too. Bright, forward recording — not from the sound track.

Melodies for Sweethearts: Paul Weston and His Orchestra; Columbia CL-6192, \$3.00.

▲Eight favorites, covering a period of twenty or thirty years, all waltzes. Played lushly — neat recording!

Tangos; Victor LPM-3003, \$2.62. **Rumbas;** Victor LPM-3004, \$2.62. Both played by Emil Coleman and his Orchestra.

▲For more than thirty years, Emil Coleman has been playing his smooth, danceable music in elegant New York night spots — at present the Empire Room of the Waldorf-Astoria. Dance music has changed but not Coleman's way of presenting it. Here are two discs of currently popular music, well played, if somewhat passionately.

Andre Previn Plays Harry Warren; Andre Previn, piano, with rhythm; Victor LPM-3002, \$2.62.

▲Victor continues its series of music by top-drawer popular composers played by

top-drawer musicians. Previn's smooth style and rhythm do full justice to Warren's *I Only Have Eyes For You*, *Lullaby of Broadway*, and others. Appropriately smooth recording.

Beatrice Kay; Beatrice Kay with Hugo Winterhalter and his Orchestra; Victor LPM-3000, \$2.62.

▲Beatrice Kay sings songs which our parents and grandparents sang a generation or more ago. She wrings the bathos out of such tear-jerkers as *She Is More To Be Pitied Than Censured*, shouts *The Band Played On* with lungs of brass, and growls *A Good Man Is Hard To Find* with a gravel throat. Here is a unique entertainment, or should we say burlesque? A male chorus and Hugo Winterhalter aid and abet her to the hilt.

Modern Jazz Piano; Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Lennie Tristano, Andre Previn, Errol Garner, Art Tatum, Beryl Booker, Mary Lou Williams, and Oscar Peterson; Victor LPT-31, \$3.15.

▲Another "Treasury" disc. Some gems, too. Especially the Duke Ellington — Billy Strayhorn one piano duet of *Tonk*. All were recorded during '46 and '47. Shouldn't be missed by anyone interested in the many-faceted music called jazz.

Bob Crosby's Bobcats; Capitol H-293, \$2.98.

▲Not all of the original Bobcats but a very good facsimile of the famous group whose name is synonymous with Dixieland jazz. The music, however, is still the same: *Ostrich Walk*, *Magnolia Street Parade*, *Fidgety Feet*, and others. The present day Bobcats are Eddie Miller, tenor sax, Matty Matlock, clarinet, Nappy Lamare, guitar, Stan Wrightsman, piano, Charlie Teagarden, trumpet. Good, up-to-date recording.

I'll See You In My Dreams; Doris Day, with Danny Thomas, Paul Weston and his orchestra, and the Norman Luboff Choir; Columbia CL-6198, \$3.00.

▲An ingratiating and enjoyable souvenir of the picture about Gus Kahn and his music with the two artists who play the

leads in the film. But even the engaging personalities of the two artists do not eclipse the appeal of the Kahn tunes like *It Had To Be You*, *Nobody's Sweetheart*, *My Buddy, Makin' Whoopee*, *I'll See You In My Dreams*, and others.

The Wearin' of the Green; Phil Regan and The Jud Conlon Singers, with orchestra of Lou Bring and Norman Leyden; Victor LPM-3001, \$2.62.

▲An excellent tribute to St. Patrick's Day. Some old and some new, some comic and some serious, but all splendidly sung by Phil Regan with the right lilt and brogue.

▲Worthwhile singles this month include: **Tenderly** (Columbia 39648) which presents Rosemary Clooney in a new light; a rather elaborate presentation of **I Talk To the Trees** from *Paint Your Wagon* by Percy Faith and his orchestra, with The Magic Voices (Columbia 39638) . . . an excellent dance disc by Les Baxter of **Please, Mr. Sun** and **Blue Tango** (Capitol 1966) . . . an equally good one by Billy May and His Orchestra of **Silver and Gold** (Capitol 1955), the new tune which is heading for the top . . . also **Les Trois Cloches** sung in English by Les Compagnons de la Chanson (Columbia 39657) . . . an appealing King Cole, **You Weren't There** (Capitol 1968) . . . a grand treatment of Ellington's **I Let a Song Go Out of my Heart** by Ray Anthony and his orchestra (Capitol 1957) . . . and a new **Sugar Blues** in boogie, demonstrating that Clyde McCoy hasn't lost any of his skill on the trumpet — nor his corn, either (Capitol 1937).

Among the good Victor 45's are **The Sweetheart Serenade** and **Honey Lips** by Freddy Martin and his orchestra (47-4362) . . . **At Last! At Last!**, a Tony Martin (47-4477) . . . an appealing duet, Tony Bavaar and June Valli singing **What You Don't Know of Love** (47-4485) . . . Dinah Shore at her most forceful in **Warm Hearted Woman** (47-4493) . . . and two excellent Ralph Flanagan's, **More Than Love** (47-4494), which is the **Tango of Roses**, and **On My Way Now** (47-4487).

—Enzo Archetti
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